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Culture of peace

Letter dated 22 October 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward the revised text of the Declaration of the Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, which was convened by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, in Madrid from 16 to 18 July 2008 and previously issued as document A/63/311 (see annex). We would appreciate it if the present letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly under agenda item 45.

(*Signed*) Abdullatif H. **Sallam**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 22 October 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Madrid Declaration issued by the World Conference on Dialogue

Organized by the Muslim World League in Madrid

Under the Patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud

16-18 July 2008
(13-15 Rajab 1429 A.H.)

In response to the kind invitation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, the Muslim World League organized the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid from 16 to 18 July 2008 (13 to 15 Rajab 1429 A.H.).

The participants in the Conference, which included followers of the world religions coming from different cultures in addition to researchers and intellectuals, expressed their profound gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for his patronage, his presence at the inauguration of the Conference and his speech, considered as a major document of the Conference.

Furthermore, the participants expressed their gratefulness and appreciation to His Majesty Juan Carlos I of Spain for his comprehensive welcoming speech, to H.E. Mr. Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, Prime Minister of Spain, for his participation in the opening session and for his efforts towards dialogue among cultures and civilizations, to the Spanish Government for hosting the Conference in Spain, a country rich in historical heritage common to the followers of different religions which has contributed substantially to the development of human civilization:

- Recalled the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for making collective efforts aimed at the enhancement of international relations, the creation of a harmonious human community and the promotion of dialogue as an educated way of cooperation;
- Evoked the document of the United Nations General Assembly in 1994, which called for tolerance and the spread of the culture of peace, as well as the declarations of 1995 as the Year of Tolerance and of 2001 as the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations;
- Acknowledged the Appeal of Makkah, issued by the World Islamic Conference in Dialogue, convened by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and organized by the Muslim World League earlier in 2008;
- Built on the agreement among the followers of religious and leading cultures regarding the value of dialogue as the best way to achieve mutual understanding and cooperation in human relations as well as peaceful coexistence among nations.

In light of the above, the participants affirm the following principles:

1. The unity of humankind has existed from the origin of creation; there is equality among human beings, irrespective of their colour, ethnicity, race, religion or culture.

2. Human beings suffer from an interior dichotomy between evil inclinations and a love for good and justice. With divine help and the active participation of each person, they can dominate what is evil in them and progress on the path of good.

3. Diversity and differences among peoples is a reality permitted by God and should serve human advancement and prosperity.

4. Religions strive to call forth the obedience of persons to their Creator as well as to promote happiness, justice, security and peace for humankind. These religions seek to enhance ways of understanding, coexistence and cooperation among people despite their differences. They also call for spreading human moral values, wisdom and respect, rejecting all forms of extremism and terrorism.

5. Respect for religions, their places of worship and their symbols should be promoted therefore preventing the derision of what people consider sacred.

6. Respecting human dignity, promoting human rights, fostering peace, honouring agreements and respecting the traditions of peoples as well as their right to security, freedom and self-determination, are the basis for building good relations among all peoples. Achieving this is a major objective of all religions and prominent cultures.

7. Religions, while they call for obedience to the Creator, are aware of their capacity to offer a valid contribution in promoting moral values; fighting against crime, terrorism, corruption and drug addiction; preserving the institution of the family as well as protecting societies from deviant behaviours.

8. Family is considered the basic unit of society and its nucleus, and therefore it must be protected against any threat of disintegration as it is the cornerstone for a secure and stable society.

9. Dialogue is one of the essentials of life. It is also one of the most important means for peoples to become acquainted with each other, to foster cooperation and mutual benefit and to search for truth, contributing, therefore, to the happiness of humankind.

10. The preservation of the environment and its protection from pollution and other dangers are considered among the major objectives for all religions and cultures.

Mindful of the necessity of implementing the above-mentioned principles through dialogue, the Conference reviewed the process of dialogue and its impediments, indicating the tragedies that afflicted humanity in the twentieth century. The Conference also noted that terrorism in one of the most serious obstacles to dialogue and peaceful coexistence, and that it is a global phenomenon which must be confronted in a serious, responsible and just way, requiring unified international efforts. This calls for international agreement on defining terrorism, addressing its root causes, and promoting justice, security and stability in the world.

Based on the above, the Conference recommends the following:

1. To reject theories that call for the clash of civilizations and cultures and to be aware of the danger of campaigns seeking to create and deepen conflicts, so destabilizing peace and security.

2. To enhance common human moral values, cooperate in their promotion within societies and address the problems that hinder their achievement.

3. To disseminate the culture of mutual respect and understanding through dialogue among peoples by holding conferences and symposiums, as well as by developing relevant cultural, educational and media programmes.

4. To agree on international guidelines for dialogue among the followers of religions in different cultures through which moral values and ethical principles, which are common elements of religions, are confirmed and supported so as to strengthen stability and achieve prosperity for all humans.

5. To work on a document related to the promotion or respect of religions and their symbols.

To fulfil the above-mentioned objectives formulated by this Conference, the participants have agreed on adopting the following:

1. Forming a working group to study the problems which hinder dialogue and prevent it from realizing its desired objectives. The group would also prepare a study that provides a vision for the solutions to these problems.

2. Promoting cooperation among religious, cultural, educational and media institutions to deepen and consolidate ethical values, to encourage constructive social practices and to confront immoral behaviour, family disintegration and other such degeneration.

3. Organizing inter-religious and intercultural meetings, conducting research, executing media programmes and using the Internet and other media for the dissemination of the culture of peace, understanding and harmonious coexistence.

4. Promoting the practice of dialogue among religions, civilizations and cultures through educational, cultural and media activities, in particular taking into consideration younger generations.

5. Informing the United Nations General Assembly of the results reached by the Conference.

In abiding by the above agreed principles and concepts, the participants emphasized that it is important for this World Conference on Dialogue to continue; consequently, sessions should be held periodically.

The participants extended their profound gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, for his initiative and invitation to this World Conference on Dialogue. They also expressed their appreciation to the Muslim World League and other organizations that cooperated in organizing the Conference. They encouraged the Muslin World League to continue its efforts in the fields of dialogue and cooperation among nations and peoples, hoping that their common aspirations can be fulfilled.